

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 134280
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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR IS XF

SUBJECT: HABIB'S MEETING WITH RABBI SCHINDLER

1. RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER, CHAIRMAN OF THE CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS OF MAJOR AMERICAN JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS, ACCOMPANIED BY YEHUDA HELLMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PRESIDENTS' CONFERENCE, CALLED ON UNDER SECRETARY HABIB JUNE 7 TO REPORT ON HIS VISIT TO ISRAEL AND HIS MEETINGS WITH BEGIN, YADIN, ET AL. SCHINDLER SAID HE CAME BACK FROM ISRAEL "REASSURED" ABOUT BEGIN, WHOM HE CHARACTERIZED AS A STATESMAN WHO WOULD EFFECTIVELY MAKE TRANSITION FROM LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION TO PRIME MINISTER. SCHINDLER CITED SEVERAL EXAMPLES OF BEGIN'S STATESMANLIKE QUALITIES, FIRST OF WHICH HE CONSIDERED TO BE APPOINTMENT OF DAYAN AS FOREIGN MINISTER. BEGIN KNEW THIS WOULD BE UNPOPULAR, BUT BELIEVED DAYAN HAD IMPORTANT QUALITIES OF STRENGTH AND IMAGINATION NECESSARY TO DEFEND ISRAEL'S NATIONAL INTERESTS

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 134280

IN DIFFICULT TIMES. OTHER EXAMPLES HE CITED INCLUDED BEGIN'S SUPPORT OF PAINFUL DECISION TO NEGOTIATE WITH TERRORISTS DURING LAST SUMMER'S AIR FRANCE HIJACKING, HIS LOYALTY TO THE GOVERNMENT WHENEVER ABROAD DURING HIS LONG YEARS AS LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION, AND HIS ABSTENTION FROM KNESSET VOTE TO ENDORSE RESOLUTION 242, DESPITE HIS PERSONAL RESERVATIONS.

2. SCHINDLER SAID SEVERAL TIMES HE DID NOT BELIEVE BEGIN WOULD BE AN OBSTACLE TO THE PEACE PROCESS, AT LEAST OVER THE NEXT YEAR. PARTICULARLY IF U.S. DECIDED TO RETURN TO STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH, SCHINDLER SAID BEGIN WOULD BE VERY FORTHCOMING ON CONCESSIONS IN GOLAN AND SINAI. WHEN ASKED IF THIS APPLIED TO WEST BANK AS WELL, HE MAINTAINED THAT HE AND BEGIN DID NOT DISCUSS THIS SUBJECT. HABIB STRESSED THAT THIS ADMINISTRATION IS STRONGLY COMMITTED TO SEEKING A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION AND THIS SHOULD BE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD IN ISRAEL DESPITE ITS OBVIOUS PREFERENCE FOR A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH.

3. SCHINDLER BELIEVED THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY WOULD LINE UP SOLIDLY BEHIND BEGIN GOVERNMENT. PRESIDENTS' CONFERENCE, WHICH SCHINDLER HEADS, REPRESENTING VIRTUALLY EVERY SHADE OF AMERICAN JEWISH OPINION, UNANIMOUSLY IN AGREEMENT ON THIS. "OUR COMMITMENT IS TO THE STATE OF ISRAEL, NOT TO ANY PARTY," HE SAID.

4. HABIB NOTED CLOSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LABOR PARTY AND AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY AND ASKED WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF LABOR STRONGLY OPPOSED LIKUD GOVERNMENT POLICIES. SCHINDLER DID NOT CONSIDER THIS A REALISTIC POLICY OVER SHORT TERM BUT ADDED RATHER THAT THIS COULD CHANGE OVER TIME. SCHINDLER EMPHASIZED THAT NO SIGNIFICANT BODY OF OPINION IN ISRAEL SUPPORTS WITHDRAWAL TO 1967 BORDERS AND AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY WILL SUPPORT ISRAELIS ON THIS. HABIB POINTED OUT THAT PRESIDENT CARTER HAS MADE CLEAR THAT

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 134280

ALL ASPECTS OF A SETTLEMENT WOULD HAVE TO BE NEGOTIATED AMONGST THE PARTIES CONCERNED.

5. HABIB SAID THAT BEGIN'S VISIT TO QADDUM IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS ELECTION HAD SENT A BAD SIGNAL WHICH HAD DISQUIETING EFFECTS. SCHINDLER SAID HE HAD URGED BEGIN TO BE CAUTIOUS AND AVOID PROVOCATIVE ACTIONS, BUT ADDED THAT RECENT U.S. PRONOUNCEMENTS HAD HAD SIMILAR DISQUIETING EFFECTS IN ISRAEL. THESE NOT ONLY CAUSE GREAT ANXIETY IN ISRAEL BUT ALSO UNREALISTICALLY HEIGHTEN ARAB EXPECTATIONS AND DEMANDS.

6. SCHINDLER THOUGHT BEGIN WOULD BE ABLE TO ORGANIZE A GOVERNMENT WITHIN FIRST 21-DAY PERIOD AND WOULD BE INSTALLED AS PRIME MINISTER ON JUNE 28. HE MIGHT START OUT WITH A NARROW RIGHT-WING COALITION BUT WOULD SOON BROADEN IT TO INCLUDE DMC AFTER HISTADRUT ELECTION. HE THOUGHT YADIN WOULD HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO JOIN GOVERNMENT. OTHERWISE DMC WOULD FALL APART AND MANY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

WOULD JOIN LIKUD ON THEIR OWN. HE ALSO PREDICTED NUMEROUS CROSSEOVERS FROM LABOR AND CONSIDERED NATIONAL-UNITY GOVERNMENT A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY WITHIN A YEAR.

7. SCHINDLER SAID HE HAD TOLD YADIN HE SHOULD JOIN GOVERNMENT WITHOUT DELAY TO INSURE A BROADER IDEOLOGICAL BASE AND AVERT POSSIBILITY OF SERIOUS DIVISION WITHIN AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY.

8. HABIB SAID WE WERE ANXIOUS TO RECEIVE BEGIN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND WOULD EXTEND A FORMAL INVITATION AS SOON AS HIS GOVERNMENT IS CONFIRMED. SCHINDLER SAID BEGIN WAS EAGER TO COME BUT MIGHT HAVE TO DELAY TRIP SOMEWHAT IF HIS DOCTOR DID NOT CONSIDER HIM FULLY RECOVERED.

9. IN DISCUSSING BEGIN THE MAN, SCHINDLER DESCRIBED HIM AS VERY WARM, OPEN, AND HONEST, PASSIONATELY COMMITTED TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE AND JEWISH DESTINY. HE TALKS A GREAT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 STATE 134280

DEAL BUT ALSO LISTENS VERY WELL. HE IS VERY SURE OF HIMSELF AND UTTERLY CONVINCED OF HIS ABILITY TO PERSUADE OTHERS, INCLUDING PRESIDENT CARTER, OF HIS POINT OF VIEW. ONE CAN NOT CONCLUDE A CONVERSATION WITH HIM IN A FEW MINUTES BUT MUST METHODICALLY DISCUSS AN ISSUE FROM START TO FINISH. HABIB SAID WE WOULD MAKE SURE HE AND PRESIDENT CARTER HAVE PLENTY OF TIME FOR EXHAUSTIVE DISCUSSION OF ISSUES.

10. SCHINDLER SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO ESTABLISH REGULAR PROCESS OF CONSULTATION WITH DEPARTMENT, HOPEFULLY TO AVERT FUTURE "FLAPS" BEFORE THEY OCCUR. HABIB AGREED AND SAID HE WOULD BE GLAD TO MEET SCHINDLER AT ANY TIME.

11. THROUGHOUT MEETING SCHINDLER ACCENTUATED THE POSITIVE AND STRESSED SOLIDITY OF AMERICAN JEWISH SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL, WHILE NOTING ANXIETY WHICH RECENT ISRAELI DEVELOPMENTS HAVE CREATED. HE MADE ONLY PASSING REFERENCE TO RECENT AMERICAN STATEMENTS THAT HAVE CAUSED CONCERN IN ISRAEL AND, CONTRARY TO SOME PRESS REPORTS, BORE NO MESSAGE FROM BEGIN OR ANY OTHER ISRAELI LEADER. VANCE

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